

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A cooking grate comprising:

a frame comprising an exterior frame element;

at least one interior frame element comprising a cooking utensil supporting surface, said cooking utensil supporting surface elevated from said exterior frame element;

at least one recessed surface extending from said cooking utensil supporting surface, a top of said recessed surface separated from a top of said cooking utensil supporting surface, thereby providing a gap for passage of a burner flame; ~~and~~

at least one cross member frame element comprising a top surface, said top surface substantially coplanar with said cooking utensil supporting surface, each said cross member frame element extending between and attached to said exterior frame element and said at least one interior frame element; and

at least one support finger extending from at least one of said exterior frame element and interior frame element, each said support finger comprising a first end and a second end, said first end attached to said exterior frame element or said interior frame element, said second end unattached.

2. (original) A cooking grate in accordance with Claim 1, said grate comprising a first interior element and a second interior element, each of said first interior element and said second interior element comprising a recessed surface.

3. (original) A cooking grate in accordance with Claim 1 further comprising a plurality of support fingers extending from said interior frame element and said exterior frame element.

4. (original) A cooking grate in accordance with Claim 3 wherein said support fingers comprise elliptical arcs.

5. (original) A cooking grate in accordance with Claim 1 wherein said cooking grate is substantially rectangular.

6. (currently amended) A grate assembly for a gas cooking appliance, said grate assembly comprising:

at least one exterior frame element;

at least one support finger extending from said exterior frame, said support finger comprising a top surface extending above said at least one exterior frame element, each said support finger comprising a first end and a second end, said first end attached to said exterior frame element, said second end unattached;

at least one interior frame element comprising a top surface extending above said at least one exterior frame element, said top surface of said interior frame element substantially coplanar with said top surface of said support finger; ~~and~~

at least one cross member frame element comprising a top surface, said top surface substantially coplanar with said top surface of said at least one interior frame element, each said cross member frame element extending between and attached to said exterior frame element and said at least one interior frame element; and

at least one recessed surface extending from said top surface of said interior frame element, said recessed surface defining a clearance for passage of a burner flame.

7. (original) A grate assembly in accordance with Claim 6, said assembly comprising a first grate section, a second grate section, and a bridge spacer section.

8. (original) A grate assembly in accordance with Claim 7 wherein at least one of said first grate section and said second grate section comprises a cross member frame element substantially dividing said grate section, said at least one recessed surface located in said cross member frame element.

9. (original) A grate assembly in accordance with Claim 6 wherein said at least one interior frame element comprises a first recessed surface and a second recessed surface.

10. (original) A grate assembly in accordance with Claim 6 wherein said grate assembly is substantially rectangular.

11. (currently amended) A grate assembly for a gas cooktop, said grate assembly comprising:

at least one grate section, each said grate section comprising a substantially rectangular frame comprising:

at least one exterior frame element comprising a top surface;

at least one interior frame element comprising a top surface; and

a cross member frame element comprising a top surface, said cross member frame element extending between and attached to said exterior frame element and ~~intersecting~~ said interior frame element, said top surfaces of said cross member frame element and said interior frame element substantially coplanar and elevated relative to a top surface of said exterior frame element; and

at least one of said cross member frame element and said interior frame element comprising a recessed surface extending from said coplanar surface, said recessed surface comprising a flame clearance gap.

12. (original) A grate assembly in accordance with Claim 11, said recessed surface approximately centered in said cross member frame element.

13. (original) A grate assembly in accordance with Claim 11 wherein said interior frame element comprises a first recessed portion and a second recessed portion, said first recessed portion and said second recessed portion located on opposite sides of said cross member.

14. (original) A grate assembly in accordance with Claim 11 further comprising at least one support finger extending from said frame, said support finger extending in an elliptical arc.

15. (original) A grate assembly in accordance with Claim 11 further comprising a bridge spacer section comprising a top surface coplanar with said top surface of said interior frame element, and at least one recessed portion extending from said top surface of said bridge spacer section.

16. (original) A grate assembly in accordance with Claim 15 wherein said recessed surface is concave.

17. (currently amended) A gas fired cooktop comprising:

at least a first gas burner and a second gas burner; and

a grate assembly surrounding said first gas burner and said second gas burner, said grate assembly comprising an exterior frame element, an interior frame element extending between said first gas burner and said second gas burner, and a cross member frame element extending between and attached to said exterior frame element and said interior frame element, said interior frame element and said cross member frame element comprising a cooking utensil surface and a flame clearance recessed portion extending from said cooking utensil surface.

18. (original) A cooktop in accordance with Claim 17 wherein said grate assembly comprises a rectangular grate section surrounding said first burner and said second burner.

19. (original) A cooktop in accordance with Claim 18 wherein said cooktop comprises four burners, said grate assembly comprising a first grate section, a second grate section, and a bridge spacer section therebetween.

20. (currently amended) A cooktop in accordance with Claim 18 wherein ~~said grate section comprises an interior cross member frame element~~, said recessed portion substantially centered in said cross member frame element.

21. (original) A cooktop in accordance with Claim 20 wherein said recess portion is concave.

22. (currently amended) A gas fired cooktop comprising:

a first gas burner and an adjacent second gas burner;

a first grate section surrounding said first and second gas burners;

a third gas burner and an adjacent fourth gas burner, said third and fourth gas burners adjacent said first and second gas burners;

a second grate section surrounding said third and fourth gas burners;

a bridge spacer grate section extending between said first grate section and said second grate section; a top surface of each of said first grate section, second grate section, and bridge spacer section comprising a substantially coplanar utensil supporting surface; and

a recessed surface portion extending from said utensil supporting surface between each adjacent gas burner;

said first and said second grate sections comprising:

a frame comprising an exterior frame element;

at least one interior frame element comprising a top surface substantially coplanar with said cooking utensil supporting surface, said cooking utensil supporting surface elevated from said exterior frame element; and

at least one cross member frame element comprising a top surface, said top surface substantially coplanar with said cooking utensil supporting surface, each said cross

member frame element extending between and attached to said exterior frame element and said at least one interior frame element.

23. (original) A cooktop in accordance with Claim 22 wherein said recessed surface portion is substantially centered between each adjacent burner in said first and second grate section.

24. (original) A cooktop in accordance with Claim 23 wherein at least one of said first and second grate sections is substantially rectangular.

25. (original) A cooktop in accordance with Claim 22 further comprising a plurality of elliptically extending support fingers extending from each of said first grate, second grate and said bridge spacer section.

26. (original) A cooktop in accordance with Claim 22 wherein said recessed portion is concave.